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New Administrator of Equal Rights Division Named
Secretary Roberta Gassman Appoints Jennifer A. Ortiz of Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee, Inc. to DWD Management Team

Madison – Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman today announced the appointment of Jennifer A. Ortiz of Milwaukee as Administrator of the Division of Equal Rights (ERD). Ortiz has a 17-year history as an attorney and supervisor with the Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee, Inc. with an extensive background representing low-income families in the areas of family law, housing law, public interest law, elder law and mental disability law.

Ortiz, a frequent speaker and mentor to high school students, is an active board member of the Wisconsin Hispanic Lawyers Association, Board Member of the Johnston Community Health Center, which provides services to low income families and children, Guest Lecturer at Marquette University Law School, Guest Lecturer for the Wisconsin State Bar, member of the State Bar of Wisconsin Continuing Legal Education Committee; member of Phi Alpha Delta Law Fraternity, and member of the Marquette University Educational Opportunity Program Alumni.

Governor Doyle applauded the selection of Ortiz, "Jennifer Ortiz is an excellent choice to run the Equal Rights Division in DWD. Given her extensive legal background and leadership in the community, she is the ideal candidate to lead the agency that provides equal rights enforcement throughout the state. Her commitment and work on behalf of Wisconsin's low-income workers and their families, along with her active involvement in many community boards and organizations will serve the state well. I am proud to include her in my administration."

Said Gassman, "We were fortunate to have a great field of candidates from which to make our selection and grateful for so much interest in this essential position. Jennifer's background as a trial lawyer and supervisor at the Legal Aid Society, along with her extensive community service work, will be a great asset to our department. Jennifer has dedicated her career to protecting the rights of children and families and advancing equitable treatment for everyone, so I know she will move easily into this state's top equal rights leadership role."

Said Ortiz, "I appreciate having the opportunity to work with this administration to forward the rights of Wisconsin's workers. The mission of the Equal Rights Division parallels my own commitment to helping others. With this new and rewarding position, I have the opportunity to take my skills to a new level and provide service and support to individuals throughout the state. This challenging opportunity will allow me to guide the agency which is responsible for enforcing anti-discrimination laws, timely and appropriate payment of wages and other labor laws. I look forward to the challenges of this new position."

Ortiz's appointment is effective April 24.

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Ortiz will lead the Equal Rights Division, with offices in Madison, Milwaukee, Fox Valley, Eau Claire and Wausau, which enforces Labor Standards law and policy. Each year the division handles 4,100 labor standards complaints including issues on prevailing wage rates, hours of work and overtime, child labor laws, enforcement of minimum wage and employer compliance with business closing and mass layoff laws.

The division also enforces Wisconsin's Fair Employment and Medical Leave laws, resolving 4,500 civil rights complaints each year on such issues as fair employment, housing, public accommodations, family and medical leave and retaliation in the workplace.

Added Gassman, "I also wish to thank LeAnna Ware of ERD for stepping in and taking on the responsibilities of the Administrator in the interim. LeAnna was invaluable in providing day-to-day leadership for the division and with her knowledge of laws and policies regarding discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations, as well as the Family and Medical Leave Act, she will continue to serve the department well."

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